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NOMINATION OF MICHAEL I. BURCH TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

NINETY-EIGHTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

NOMINATION OF

MICHAEL I. BURCH TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NOVEMBER 17, 1983

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NOMINATION OF MICHAEL I. BURCH TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1983

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, D.C.

The committee met in open session, pursuant to other business, at 4:05 p.m., in room SR–222, Russell Senate Office Building, Senator John Tower (chairman) presiding.

Present: Senators Tower, Warner, and Nunn.

Staff present: Alan R. Yuspeh, general counsel; Paul C. Besozzi, minority counsel; Patrick A. Tucker, counsel; Christine C. Dauth, chief clerk; Michael B. Donley, Richard D. Finn, Jr., George K. Johnson, Jr., James R. Locker III, David S. Lyles, Bruce D. Porter, Arnold L. Punaro, and James C. Smith, professional staff members; Drew A. Harker, research assistant; Tamara L. Farnsworth and Toni D. White, staff assistants.

Also present: John G. Campbell and Guy Copeland, assistants to Senator Warner; Jon Etherton, assistant to Senator Jepsen; Henry J. Steenstra, assistant to Senator Quayle; Larry Siegel, assistant to Senator Cohen; and Edward McGaffigan, Jr., assistant to Senator Bingaman.

OPENING STATEMENT BY SENATOR JOHN TOWER, CHAIRMAN

Chairman TOWER. Pending before the committee and eligible for consideration today are 88 routine nominations. These have all been before the committee the required 7 days. No objection has been raised.

In addition, there were, 1,574 routine military nominations received yesterday. I would like to suggest the committee waive the 7-day rule with respect to these nominations in order that they may be considered by the Senate prior to recess.

I am prepared to entertain a motion that the nominations be favorably reported.

Senator NUNN. I so move, Mr. Chairman, with the request that the staff be able to look at those and reserve the right to bring one back up if we need to.

Chairman TOWER. We will ask them not to take them up until tomorrow.

We also have before the committee the nomination of Dr. Francis Coleman of Florida to be reappointed as a member of the Board of Regents for the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

Dr. Coleman was confirmed by the Senate earlier this year in this exact position. The Office of Government Ethics has reissued an opinion as of today that Dr. Coleman continues to be in compliance with all conflict of interest regulations.

Since this is a reappointment and since there is no conflict of interest impediment, I would ask the committee to waive the 7-day rule and to favorably report the Coleman nomination to the Senate.

Senator NUNN. I would so move with the same reservation about its being held over until tomorrow.

Chairman TOWER. We now turn to the consideration of the nomination of Michael Burch to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs.

Mr. Burch served from 1963 to 1983 as a public affairs officer in the U.S. Air Force. He recently retired from the Air Force as a lieutenant colonel.

For the last 11 years, Mr. Burch served at the Pentagon, and his most recent assignment was as Military Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, the position to which he is now nominated.

Mr. Burch's nomination was received only yesterday and Secretary Weinberger has specifically asked that we act as expeditiously as possible to confirm the nomination prior to the adjournment of Congress.

Secretary Weinberger has indicated to me that it is quite important to him to have Mr. Burch confirmed in the position for the next 2 months while Congress is in recess.

Therefore, I shall ask the committee, after Mr. Burch testifies, if it will waive the 7-day rule to act on this nomination.

The staff of the committee has met with Mr. Burch to review his financial holdings. That review indicates that Mr. Burch has no financial involvements that would create any conflict of interest with the position for which he is nominated.

I defer to Senator Nunn for any comment he may have.

Senator NUNN. I don't have any comment at this time.

We would like 1 more day to look at this.

Chairman TOWER. Without objection, your nomination reference and your biographical sketch will be entered in the hearing record at this point.

[The nomination reference and biographical sketch of Michael I. Burch follow:]

NOMINATION REFERENCE

AS IN EXECUTIVE SESSION,
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,
November 16, 1983.

Ordered, that the following nomination be referred to the Committee on Armed Services:

Michael Ira Burch, of Florida, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Henry E. Catto, Jr., resigned.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF MICHAEL I. BURCH

Michael Ira Burch was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on June 20, 1941. He earned his B.A. Degree at the University of Missouri in 1963 in Radio and Television and did graduate work in public relations at Boston University and American Uni-

versity. He was commissioned through the Air Force ROTC program in 1963 and served 20 years on active duty as a public affairs officer. His military career included eleven years of continuous duty in the Pentagon (1972 to 1983) where he served in both the Offices of the Secretary of the Air Force and Secretary of Defense. Prior to leaving the Air Force in the summer of 1983, he served for four years as Military Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs).

Upon retirement from the military in August 1983, he became president of Washington Communications Corporation, publishers of Washington Journalism Review. Secretary of Defense Weinberger asked him to return to the Pentagon as Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs).

Mr. Burch is married to the former Marian Anne Alson of St. Joseph, Missouri. They have one daughter, Paige.

Chairman TOWER. At this time I would like to recognize Colonel Burch for any comments he would like to make.

STATEMENT OF COL. MICHAEL I. BURCH

Colonel BURCH. I have no prepared statement, Mr. Chairman.

I am happy to be here to answer any of your questions.

Chairman TOWER. Mr. Burch, does this mean you will be the voice of the Pentagon? You are succeeding Mr. Catto?

Colonel BURCH. That is correct, sir.

It is more than just being the voice of the Pentagon. It also carries with it a management function of overseeing all the Armed Forces radio and television stations throughout the world, the Stars and Stripes newspapers, the Defense Audio-Visual Agency, and the general security review and freedom of information function.

It is a lot more than being a spokesman.

Chairman TOWER. Mr. Burch, would you agree to appear before this or any other duly constituted committee of the Congress to respond to questions on your area of responsibility any time, if so summoned?

Colonel BURCH. At any time I am summoned, I will.

Chairman TOWER. I have a couple of questions, Mr. Burch, that I will submit for the record.

Senator Nunn?

Senator NUNN. Mr. Burch, are you in the Office of Public Affairs now as consultant?

Colonel BURCH. Yes, sir, I have been working as a consultant since the 1st of November when I retired from the Air Force.

Senator NUNN. Is that a full-time position?

Colonel BURCH. Yes, sir, it is.

Senator NUNN. You retired from the Air Force when?

Colonel BURCH. Effective November. Actually I began terminal on the 15th of August and had taken civilian employment.

Mr. Weinberger asked me to return on the 21st of September. So, on the 21st of September I came off leave, helped him with his trip to China, the diplomatic funeral in Korea, and have been with him ever since.

Chairman TOWER. You have in effect been active since Mr. Catto resigned?

Colonel BURCH. I have no authority to be acting.

Chairman TOWER. Although you are consultant, you have been, in effect, performing a lot of his duties?

Colonel BURCH. In effect I have been Mr. Weinberger's principal adviser on public affairs.

Senator NUNN. I don't really know the answer to this question and maybe you do or don't. If you don't, we can get it for the record.

Do you know of any other retired military officer that has been in that position?

Colonel BURCH. Yes, sir, William I. Greener, Jr., was a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force, retired, and then held a number of spokesman positions within the administration.

I can't remember the specific years, but he was Donald Rumsfeld's spokesman.

Senator WARNER. He was a Regular or Reserve officer?

Colonel BURCH. Regular officer.

Senator WARNER. For 20 years?

Colonel BURCH. Yes, sir.

Senator NUNN. No problem.

You, of course, have followed the events in Grenada and the debate on the press access or lack thereof, have you not?

Colonel BURCH. Very closely.

Senator NUNN. Do you have views on that which you would like to share with us?

Colonel BURCH. I would like to assure the committee and the public that the manner in which press relations were conducted in Grenada does not set a principle for all future operations, nor would we ever take any action regarding press relations that would ever jeopardize the safety of American fighting men.

We realize the decision is not easy on how to handle the press during sensitive operations. We are trying to come up with some means of accommodating the press in most instances, but I am afraid that those decisions will have to be made on a case-by-case basis.

I don't know any one standard which can be applied to all military operations.

Senator NUNN. Did you read Mr. Catto's op ed piece?

Colonel BURCH. Yes.

Senator NUNN. You had worked with him before?

Colonel BURCH. I was his military assistant for 2 years and had in fact taken civilian employment with a firm that is owned by his wife before I returned to the Pentagon.

Senator NUNN. Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask unanimous consent that Catto's op ed piece be inserted in the record at this point.

Chairman TOWER. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

[From the Washington Post, Oct. 30, 1983]

DATELINE GRENADA: THE MEDIA AND THE MILITARY GO AT IT

UNHAPPILY, THE AVERAGE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF MEMBER HAS ALL THE PUBLIC RELATIONS SENSE OF ATTILA THE HUN

(By Henry E. Catto, Jr.)

In the last week in Grenada, the American military has been doing what it does very well indeed—fighting. This fact has, unfortunately, been obscured by the military's engaging in what it does not do well at all—news management.

At the same time, we have heard the American media, First Amendment held high, engage in a loud collective wail about being denied access to the action. Simultaneously, TV crews, claiming to be covering news, were stationing themselves in the homes of about-to-be-bereaved families, to catch what George F. Will has called the "pornography of grief," as the news of combat death was broken to survivors. All in all, the scenes reflected poorly on news gatherers and would-be news managers alike.

Consider the case of the military first, for it did have problems. The Grenada invasion came with very little warning. The request for help from the East Caribbean states came on Oct. 21. Grenadan Gov. Gen. Sir Paul Scoon added his plea Oct. 24, the same day Pentagon public affairs officers were informed of a possible operation. That night, the president signed the final orders, and before dawn the attack was under way. Constraints of time and the need for tactical surprise made press participation in the initial launch unwieldy and unwise.

Success came quickly to the troops, and as day one passed, press inquiries became more urgent. There were dozens of unknowns. What of casualties? Where were Grenadian leaders? Were many civilians hurt? How about the American students?

Nonetheless, the press was excluded for a second day. The ostensible reasons were that, by then, the number of interested reporters pouring into nearby Barbados was growing exponentially. Transport, lodging, logistics and food were very real problems. Reporters wandering loose would be a nuisance and a danger to those engaged in mopping up operations, and they might be taken hostage by desperate Cubans. On day three, a 15-person pool was flown briefly in, making the excluded thousand even angrier. On day four, 24 more reporters came for a few hours' look.

For the TV networks, professional frustrations were made worse by financial considerations. Unable to file stories and send pictures with the facilities at hand, the networks hired a huge and expensive C130 equipped with an earth station to overcome the lack of facilities on the ground. Lack of access meant a severe and, in their eyes, unnecessary and unwarranted expense.

Adding to this growing frustration was a great weakness of the military—an unwillingness to listen to its own public affairs people. One PA officer said to me, "We have done more to hurt the military in the last few hours than any enemy in the last 200 years." An exaggeration, no doubt, but the fact is that fear of the press is pervasive and the handling of it often unwise. Consider the buzzing, with open bomb-bay doors, of small ships carrying reports—and cameras. The evening news was full of such bellicose shots. The detaining of The Post's Edward Cody and colleagues who made it to the island before our troops was foolish.

Lurking behind these actions is an attitude on the part of the Joint Chiefs that all facets of an operation, including press relations, should lie with the operational military, not with military PA or civilian. Unhappily, the average Joint Chiefs of Staff member has all the public relations sense of Attila the Hun. And deep in his psyche is a feeling that the press cost lives, reputations and indeed victory by its access and reporting in Vietnam. During my Pentagon tour I heard more than one officer vow that never again would that happen.

Hostility between government and press was not helped by the surfacing on both sides by red herrings. Pentagon officials said they could not guarantee reporters' safety. "Hogwash," the press retorted, "we will worry about our own safety, as we always have." On the other side, an amazing number of journalists claimed in their zeal that the First Amendment guarantees "the public's right to know." It doesn't, government sources gleefully point out; it merely says the right to free speech shall not be abridged.

One serious issue did arise concerned how a government press spokesman should be treated. One school holds that he should be told everything that is happening. Given loyalty and good judgment, he will deliver news without compromising security. If he is not fully informed, he is likely to do harm out of ignorance or to lie by inadvertence.

The other school, in vogue at the Pentagon, holds that the press spokesmen (who probably leak to reporters anyway) should be kept in the dark as to what is really going on, thus staunching leaks and absolving the spokesmen of the moral problem of lying to the public. (How can you be accused of lying if you don't know the truth?) My feeling is that an informed spokesman can almost always sidestep a question that, if answered, would compromise lives or security by

saying, "I have nothing for you on that today," or some similar circumlocution. Some, such as former White House spokesman Jody Powell, disagree, feeling that lying is sometimes necessary. Perhaps the solution would be for a spokesman who lied to resign after the danger giving rise to the lie had passed.

What does a reasonable person conclude about the matter? My judgment is that the costs of denying access outweigh any benefits. In the Grenada case, the initial decision was justified. (After all, the Israelis took no press on the Entebbe raid.) But, in extending that decision, there is the following to consider:

First and worst, the people of the country *do* need to know how their lives and treasure are being expended and what the government is doing. No democracy can work otherwise.

Second, the move in Grenada will very likely prove to be one of the most important steps President Reagan will take, matching the firing of the air traffic controllers as a signal of determination and strength of purpose. The angering of the press needlessly distracted the public from this key fact and created skepticism and perhaps enmity among the very people who must report and interpret this farsighted action.

Finally, I believe that this country is well served by its military. They are courageous, able, educated and dedicated. Working with them was the proudest experience of my life. I want them to be our country's defenders, not the filters of our information.

Senator NUNN. Do you subscribe to his analysis of the Grenada situation or do you differ?

Colonel BURCH. I differ in many respects.

One, I do not think that the average member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has the mental intelligence of Atilla the Hun. I think that is quite unfair.

I had absolute cooperation with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and all the members of the Joint Chiefs as well as the Secretary of Defense.

Senator NUNN. I am not sure he said that.

Colonel BURCH. We would have to go back to the article and get the exact quote from it.

Senator NUNN. I don't have a copy.

Senator WARNER. If you will yield, I think there is one available.

Senator NUNN. I don't recall having read language that strong. I thought he said they had the public relations touch. I thought he was speaking strictly in the vein of public relations, not in terms of their intelligence.

Colonel BURCH. I would concede that point, but we should look at the exact language.

Senator NUNN. Were you running that operation?

Colonel BURCH. I had no authority to run it. I had been the Secretary's principal adviser as consultant during that operation. So, I feel I was intimately involved in it.

Senator NUNN. What do you think of the way it was handled? Was it perfect, less than perfect? What would you change?

Colonel BURCH. If we had to do it over again, we still probably could not have accommodated the press during the initial hours of the operation because of the need for absolute security, safety of the Americans and safety of our own forces.

If I had to do it over again with the exact same circumstances. I might advise that we create a larger pool as soon as the press could be accommodated.

On the third day of the operation we had a 15-man pool in on a C–130 from Barbados to Grenada. In retrospect, we probably should have tried to push for more seats.

Senator NUNN. Were you aware that Cuba had been notified several hours before our forces went in?

Colonel BURCH. I was not aware of that until about 5 a.m. the morning of the operation.

Senator NUNN. How were you notified of that?

Colonel BURCH. I received a briefing within the Joint Chief's arena.

Senator NUNN. The Joint Chiefs were notified that Cuba had already been notified before we went in?

Colonel BURCH. I don't know that, sir.

I was made aware of it during my initial operations briefing at about 5 a.m. that morning. I don't know when the JCS was notified.

Senator NUNN. Who notified them?

Colonel BURCH. I don't know that, sir.

Senator NUNN. You don't know the name?

Colonel BURCH. What happened is the evening before I attended a meeting at the State Department, actually the morning before, it was an 11 p.m. meeting that lasted until about 2 in the morning.

I stayed in the office overnight and attended the first briefing, my first operational briefing, sometime between 5 and 6 a.m.

It was at that time that I heard that the Cubans had been notified of an operation to protect Americans.

Senator NUNN. Who notified them? Was it the State Department or Defense Department?

Senator WARNER. I must go to the floor, Mr. Chairman. May I indicate a desire to have certain questions submitted for the record?

Chairman TOWER. It may be done.

Senator NUNN. Who notified you of that?

Colonel BURCH. Again, sir, I attended a briefing within the JCS arena. That was in more or less a situation room.

Chairman TOWER. You were notified at that briefing at 5 a.m. that Cuba had been notified, is that right?

Colonel BURCH. I gained information during that briefing at 5 a.m. that Cuba had been notified.

Senator NUNN. You don't know who told you that?

Colonel BURCH. No, sir. It was a briefing officer.

Senator NUNN. Somebody from the Department of Defense?

Colonel BURCH. Someone from the Department of Defense was doing the briefing. I don't recall the briefing officer's name.

Senator NUNN. When was the news media notified of the Grenada invasion?

Colonel BURCH. Officially at 7 a.m. in the morning by the White House.

Senator NUNN. Do you think there was anything amiss about the Cubans being notified before the American news media?

Colonel BURCH. I think, given the circumstances, that the action of the Government was prudent in that it was necessary to tell the Cuban Government that we were concerned about the safety of Americans. It was done for the reason that we hoped that the Cubans would not fight and instead would allow us to pass on through to secure the students and the other Americans that we were being sent to, in essence, save.

Senator NUNN. At that stage I certainly agree that having the media included in the first wave of a surprise-type action is not advisable or,

if it is advisable, only under very circumscribed circumstances, but when you let the Cubans know and they are the ones that did the fighting—they are the ones that killed a lot of our people—letting them know is probably a judgmental matter.

What justification is there for not letting the American news media know? What was it at that stage that letting the American public know through the news media that could possibly jeopardize the invasion?

Colonel BURCH. Again, I don't know specifically when the Cuban Government was informed.

Senator NUNN. It was before the American news media?

Colonel BURCH. You are correct, sir.

In retrospect, had we to do it over again, they probably should have been informed about the same time. So, I am conceding your point.

Senator NUNN. Are there any other points that come to mind that you disagree with on that article?

Colonel BURCH. In general, I agree with the thrust of the article. I think some of the criticism of the Joint Chiefs was not deserved.

Senator NUNN. Do you have any reservations, having come from the military and been a uniformed military officer, about taking over what is essentially a job that interfaces with sensitive military and Defense Department media relationships?

Colonel BURCH. None whatsoever. I have been a career public affairs officer for 20 years.

Senator NUNN. That was your military job?

Colonel BURCH. That is all I have ever done for the Air Force. It was a career I chose.

I joined the Air Force to be a public affairs or public relations officer. I think I had a good career in it. I think that career makes me uniquely qualified for this job.

Senator NUNN. Do you think it is worth exploring whether certain representatives of the news media would be willing to enter into an agreement on a case-by-case basis, make an absolute pledge to protect information?

Colonel BURCH. Indeed I would. I would like that kind of relationship with the media.

Senator NUNN. Do you plan to explore it in light of the Grenada situation?

Colonel BURCH. Yes, sir. I was actually exploring that while I was still on active duty as much as a year ago.

We have a unique problem with our rapid deployment forces in that they would have to deploy rapidly into areas of the world where American media might not have complete access. So, I become concerned about this problem a long time ago.

Unfortunately in Grenada there was not time to contact the media and to gain complete assurance they would protect the security of the operation.

Senator QUAYLE. When did you first learn of the planned operation?

Colonel BURCH. I first learned of the existence of the operation at about noon or 1 p.m. the day before.

Senator NUNN. At that stage who was in charge of press relations?

Colonel BURCH. You have to keep in mind that the military is an instrument of national security. It was a combined effort of the Na-

tional Security Council (NSC), State Department, and Defense Department to determine, one, whether or not the operation should be conducted at all.

Keep in mind that the actual execute order was not given until 6 p.m. that evening. So, we were never certain whether the operation would go or not or even be delayed several days.

My function was to advise the Secretary of Defense and the military leadership how to conduct press operations surrounding the military operations.

The State Department and the NSC have functions in the diplomatic arena and they were to handle the notification of foreign governments to prepare statements for the President, for the White House spokesman.

Senator NUNN. Who was in charge of the media itself, during the operation?

Colonel BURCH. That is not an easy question to answer because the Commander in Chief of the Atlantic Command, in essence, drew up the plan for the operation and the recommendation was made that the media could not be accommodated until after the major objectives had been achieved and all Americans had been secured.

That plan came to our national leadership and it was determined outside of my sphere of influence that that would be the initial policy and that we could not accommodate the media at that point.

Senator NUNN. That policy was given to you?

Colonel BURCH. Yes, sir, it was.

Senator NUNN. That policy was given to you coming through Admiral McDonald, from him through the NSC, back through the Defense chain, is that it?

Colonel BURCH. It is fairer to say it was the consensus of the national leadership, but the entire operation was conceived by the Atlantic Command with the approval of the Joint Chiefs with the approval of the White House and National Security Council.

My job became then one of how to accommodate the media on the operation as it existed.

Senator NUNN. Under those guidelines?

Colonel BURCH. That is correct.

And I agreed that given the circumstances under which our men were operating and the need for security and the need to secure the lives of Americans as quickly as possible, that the media could not be accommodated until after these initial phases were over.

As you all remember, we had hoped to achieve that during the first day. Unfortunately, it dragged well into a second day and it was not until the end of the second day that the Chairman and Secretary of Defense were able to announce that all of the students were safe, the rest of the Americans were secure, and we gave the order that the press could go in the following morning.

In fact, we formed a press pool from 400 newsmen that were then in Barbados and sent 15 newsmen in on a C–130.

Senator NUNN. Thank you.

Chairman TOWER. No further questions, Mr. Burch.

Thank you very much.

Colonel BURCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOWER. I am prepared to entertain a motion.

Senator NUNN. I move that the nomination be favorably reported, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOWER. If there is no objection, the nomination will be polled by the committee.

[Questions submitted by Chairman John Tower to be answered for the record follow:]

INFORMING THE PUBLIC OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY SITUATION

Chairman TOWER. How do you think we can better inform the public about our national security situation and the activities of the Defense Department?

Colonel BURCH. There needs to be an across-the-board awareness in the military of the importance of telling the public about national security and our defense strategy. To that end, there must be an education program for commanders, at all levels, on the role of the various public affairs programs and how they aid the mission. Too often the military public affairs officer is considered, by commanders, to be, "one of them," instead of "one of us." Courses in public affairs should be required in each of our military academic institutions not to train PAOs but to sensitize future commanders to the PA role.

Second, we need to attract and retain quality people in the public affairs career field. The good communicators are not recognized for their contributions to national defense and leave the military for more rewarding public relations jobs on the outside. In that same vein, I would like to bring into public affairs more people with media experience, particularly commercial television experience. Television is a medium that is gaining in importance but is not being used enough to tell our story. The story of national security is often best told through pictures.

Last, we need to do a better job of providing responses to breaking news stories. Too often defense responses appear days after the original stories. We need to be astride the story, not trying to catch up with it.

ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES

Chairman TOWER. What priorities would you establish as Assistant Secretary of Defense?

Colonel BURCH. My first priority will be to resolve the problem that exists between military commanders, who are concerned about the security of their mission and the safety of their men and women, and the news media who are the Department's link to the American people. Our handling of press during Grenada definitely did not set a precedent for all future operations but it did highlight a number of problems that exist because of the numbers of newsmen covering an operation; new technologies that could permit real time news reporting; and the pressure newsmen get from their management to cover both sides of the battlefield.

Also high on my list is reorganization of my Pentagon Public Affairs staff. We have the same basic organization that existed during the Vietnam conflict. Various cuts in the public affairs budget and reductions in manpower have left the organization structurally weak in some areas and thus unable to respond as well as I would like to the needs of commanders, the public and the media. An internal realinement of people without a request for additional resources will enable us to respond to crises and meet the day-to-day requests from the public and press.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Chairman TOWER. What are the responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs?

Colonel BURCH. Very simply, the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, insures that the Department provides the public, Congress, press, and our armed forces with accurate and timely information on national security and defense strategy. Information should only be withheld when it would adversely affect national security or threaten the safety or privacy of the men and women of the Armed Forces.

[Questions submitted by Senator John Warner to be answered for the record follow:]

PRESENCE OF NEWS MEDIA

Senator WARNER. In Paris at the UNESCO meetings about a week after the Grenada news blockade, State Department officials issued a point paper stating:

"From the beginning, our plans called for the presence of the media no later than the morning of the second day of the action."

Was there really such a plan?

Did you participate in formulating it?

Please provide a copy of this full plan for the committee.

Colonel BURCH. Yes there was a plan but not in the normal sense. It called for media participation after the rescue phase of the operation was completed. It was envisioned that this phase would be concluded by the end of the first day. It took 2 full days. The press pools began the next morning. I did participate in the formulation of these policies. I discussed the operational problems with both the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. It was decided that press pools must wait until the initial objectives were secured. Our discussions were never written into a formal plan.

NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER

Senator WARNER. As I recall, most of the information flow during a time when U.S. forces are in combat flows through the National Military Command Center.

As an acting senior adviser to the Secretary of Defense during the Grenada operations, were you afforded full and constant access to the NMCC?

Would you be as ASD/PA?

Why or why not?

Colonel BURCH. Yes, I was accorded full and constant access to the NMCC during the Grenada operation. As the ASD/PA, I will continue to have such access.

The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs has always had in the past, and must have in the future, complete access to the command and intelligence center. He must be fully informed of even the nation's most sensitive operations so that he may advise the Secretary of Defense on matters concerning release of information to the public.

[Question submitted by Senator Dan Quayle to be answered for the record follows:]

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN PRINT AND TV MEDIA

Senator QUAYLE. In looking back at the Grenada operation and in considering similar future military operations, would you consider it appropriate to distinguish between the print media and TV media in deciding who might accompany U.S. forces during initial operations? Considering security concerns, would it not have been feasible to have had a small number of reporters from the print media, who would not need to carry TV cameras and recording gear, accompany the U.S. forces during the initial operation?

Colonel BURCH. Had there been more planning time it might have been possible for us to accommodate a very small number of reporters. I would have liked to have included both print and electronic newsmen, but TV equipment usually means three people (correspondent, cameraman and soundman) and fairly bulky equipment. The need for television lights, under some circumstances also gives us problems. New equipment being developed by the industry may solve this problem.

If newsmen, even a small number of print journalists are to be included, we must have their full cooperation and complete assurance that they will not jeopardize the security of the operation or jeopardize the safety of our fighting men. Gaining such assurances requires more time than we had.

Senator TOWER. The committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:25 p.m., the committee adjourned, subject to call of the Chair.]

(The nominations of Dr. Francis Coleman and Mr. Michael Burch were reported to the Senate by Senator Tower on November 17, 1983, with the recommendation that the nominations be confirmed. The nominations were confirmed by the Senate on November 18, 1983.)

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